(b) the efforts made to sign such treaty with the countries which have not entered into this treaty so far and the reasons for failure despite such efforts;

(c) whether provision of capital punishment in India is the hurdle for such treaties being entered into; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) India has signed Extradition Treaty with twenty-two (22) countries, *viz.*, Belgium, Bhutan, Canada, Hong Kong, Nepal, Netherlands, Russia, Switzerland, United Arab Emirates (UAE), United Kingdom (UK), United States of America (U.S.A.), Uzbekistan, Spain, Mongolia, Turkey, Germany, Tunisia, Bahrain, France, Poland, Korea (ROK) and Oman.

(b) It has been the policy of the Government of India conclude Extradition Treaty with as many as countries as possible. Proposals are usually initiated after ascertaining the interest of other countries in concluding extradition treaties with India.

(c) and (d) As per Section 34 (C) of Extradition Act, 1962 where a fugitive criminal, who has committed an extraditable offence punishable with death in India, is surrendered or returned by a foreign State on the request of the Central Government; and the laws of the foreign State do not provide for death penalty for such an offence, such fugitive criminal shall be liable for punishment of imprisoment for life only for that offence.

Pakistani help for release of Indian hostage in Afghanistan

2475. SHRI R. KAMARAJ: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government had sought Pakistani help to release the hostage in Afghanistan recently;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether Pakistan had offered any assistance in this regard; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. Government had

contacted Pakistani authorities to seek their assistance in the matter of release of Indian hostage in Afghanistan.

(c) No, Sir.

(d) Does not arise.

Agreement in the field of science and technology with U.S.

2476. SHRIMATI VANGA GEETHA: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has signed an umbrella agreement on cooperation in the field of science and technology with U.S.;

(b) whether the delegation has visited Washington for this purpose;

(c) if so, the composition of such delegation;

(d) the expenditure incurred by Government thereon; and

(e) the areas identified for this purpose?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI RAO INDERJIT SINGH): (a) Yes Sir. The India-US S&T Agreement was signed on 17 October, 2005 in Washington, D.C.

(b) to (c) Yes Sir, A three-member delegation comprising the Minister of State for Science and Technology and Ocean Development, Head of the International Cooperation, Department of Science and Technology and Private Secretary to MOS (S&T & OD) visited United States to sign the agreement.

(d) The estimated expenditure incurred by the Government is Rs. 7,12,000/-.

(e) The present Agreement is an umbrella inter-governmental agreement. Specific areas of bilateral cooperation would be identified subsequently.

Investment of EPF amount

2477. SHRI RAVULA CHANDRA SEKAR REDDY: Will the Minister of LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether EPFO is examining the feasibility of investing a portion of the funds in equities to generate higher returns to make good the losses;